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# Prospects for Anti-US Terrorism

Interagency Intelligence Memorandum

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## PROSPECTS FOR ANTI-US TERRORISM

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## FOREWORD

This Interagency Intelligence Memorandum examines the sources and implications of recent terrorist acts and threats against the United States, and estimates the extent and nature of the threat posed by the leading perpetrators of these acts and threats.

It should be stressed that there are a number of intelligence gaps on several of the specific questions discussed in the Memorandum and that, consequently, the assessments it presents are in many instances based heavily on judgment.

Note: This Memorandum was requested by the Director of Central Intelligence and was produced under the auspices of the Vice Chairman, National Intelligence Council. It was coordinated with the Central Intelligence Agency; the Defense Intelligence Agency; the National Security Agency; and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Treasury, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force, and the Marine Corps.

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## KEY JUDGMENTS

It is our judgment that the Ramstein (Germany) bombing and the attack on General Kroesen, Colonel Qadhafi's threats against US personnel and facilities, and the various other threats and terrorist incidents of the past few weeks directed against the United States spring from disparate conditions and causes.

There are reasons, nonetheless, to anticipate an increase in anti-American terrorism in Latin America, the Middle East, Western Europe, and to a lesser extent in southern Africa.

The Libyans, radical Palestinians, and the West German Red Army Faction (RAF) pose the most immediate major terrorist threats to the United States, but other terrorists harbor strong anti-American feelings and have the ability to strike US interests.

There continue to be numerous ties among terrorist elements, including Libyans, Syrians, radical Palestinian terrorists, and some in Western Europe. We are agreed that some collaboration among these elements in future attacks is likely, but we differ as to whether the recent West German incidents indicate that such collaboration has begun (see paragraph 8).

There is no evidence of a Soviet hand behind recent anti-US terrorist incidents. However, Moscow bears some indirect responsibility because of its continuing support for governments and entities that practice terrorism, and its efforts, particularly in Western Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America, to stir up anti-American sentiment.

The assertive stance the United States has taken in several regions of the world also contributes to an atmosphere that is likely to encourage an upsurge in terrorism directed against US interests in the next few months.

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## DISCUSSION

## The Implications of Recent Anti-US Terrorism

1. US personnel and property were the target of a number of terrorist attacks and threats in August and September 1981. These incidents included Libyan threats to attack President Reagan and key American facilities; the bombing of the headquarters building of the US Air Force, Europe, at Ramstein Airbase in West Germany; the attempted assassination of General Kroesen, CINC USAREUR, near Heidelberg; Palestinian threats to attack US interests; the attempted murder of US servicemen in Turkey; and the attack on the US military training team in Honduras. In our judgment these attacks and threats were not coordinated but were the products of diverse regional and local situations.

2. The most important elements in these situations are:

- The reactivation of the Red Army Faction (RAF) in Germany.
- The growing anti-American spirit on the left of the West German political spectrum opposed to US "neutron bomb" and theater nuclear forces policies and the efforts by West German radicals and terrorists to exploit these sentiments and draw public attention once more to themselves and their activities.
- The probable reactivation of extremist elements in Fatah after a period of relative dormancy and the emergence of radical Palestinian splinter groups.
- A perception by many Arabs and Palestinians of US association with recent Israeli activities, including Tel Aviv's aerial attacks on Iraq and on Palestinian targets in Lebanon; Palestinian frustration at the reelection of Prime Minister Begin; anger at the resumption of deliveries of military aircraft by the United States to Israel; and internecine Palestinian and Arab quarrels.
- An increasingly confrontational stance by Libya toward the United States, catalyzed by media

allegations of US activities against Libya and by the US-Libyan military clash over the Gulf of Sidra.

3. American interests have been and will continue to be targeted by terrorists because:

- Terrorism is perceived to be a legitimate political weapon and instrument of foreign policy by numerous countries and groups that are anti-US in their ideology.
- US interests are worldwide, highly visible, and in many cases easily accessible to terrorists.
- The US presence, notably its military and diplomatic aspects, is widely regarded by leftist, and radical elements as the visible symbol of "imperialism" and "neocolonialism."
- Attacks against US interests and personnel will often serve to embarrass a host government because they will receive publicity and so serve sometimes to highlight alleged government incompetence and vulnerability.
- The occurrence of spectacular terrorist acts, such as the bombing at Ramstein, tends to have a "demonstration effect." Terrorist groups, which may have nothing in common other than visceral anti-Americanism, are prone to emulate one another as each event receives publicity.

4. US policy in recent months toward Central America, Africa, the Middle East, Western Europe, and international terrorism is perceived by radicals and revolutionaries as confrontational. The growing emphasis on combating "terrorism" has produced the very publicity that terrorists seek and has provided them with a rallying point. Some agencies note that there is no hard evidence to support these judgments.<sup>1</sup>

5. This shift in US policy is interpreted by some groups as a dare to which they are both inclined and able to respond. Whenever the United States asserts

<sup>1</sup> The holders of this view are the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Senior Intelligence Officers of the military services.

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itself by employing or threatening to employ military power and pursues policies that are disliked by fringe groups, the chances increase that its adversaries will respond with their own available (terrorist) weapons. There are reasons, therefore, to anticipate an increase in anti-American terrorism in Latin America, the Middle East, Western Europe, and to a lesser extent in southern Africa. In particular, Arab terrorism may soon be sparked by closer and more overt US-Israeli security and strategic arrangements and by the resumption of the Camp David process. There is no statistical evidence yet, however, that such an upsurge is occurring.

6. Another question of continuing concern is the degree to which various international terrorist groups and states hostile to the United States may work together against US interests. In this regard, of particular concern is the possible expansion of links among Libyan terrorists, radical Palestinians, and terrorists in Western Europe. Additionally, there are links between Syria and some radical Palestinian groups, and Iraq and such groups. Other supporters of anti-US international terrorists include Cuba and South Yemen. There are, moreover, numerous contacts among West European terrorist groups. These links may presage more coordinated anti-US terrorism than is currently the case.

7. There is evidence, for instance, that Libya and the radical Palestinians—either separately or in concert—have initiated planning for a new campaign of anti-US terrorism. [redacted] reported negotiations between Libya and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) to undertake joint action against the United States and particularly President Reagan. The Libyans have proposed that the PFLP—provided with Libyan weapons and money—undertake terrorism against US military, political, and commercial interests in Europe. The PFLP is currently debating this proposal.

8. Some agencies believe that there is a Libyan or, to a lesser extent, Palestinian role in the revival of German terrorism, a belief that is based upon past German-Palestinian cooperation in terrorism (as in the Entebbe and Mogadishu hijackings), the training of German terrorists in Palestinian or Libyan camps, and Fatah's reported plan to use "Europeans" in the resumption of attacks against US and Israeli interests

in Europe. Even in the absence of an RAF connection to the Palestinians in the recent string of terrorist incidents, it is possible, they believe, that renewed Palestinian terrorism in Western Europe might inspire joint RAF-PFLP operations.<sup>2</sup> Other agencies, however, doubt that there is any Palestinian or Libyan role in recent German terrorism. They cite as reasons for this position the lack of evidence of radical Palestinian or Libyan attempts to propose joint operations with the RAF (as there apparently have been, for example, with the Italian Red Brigades), their belief that the RAF has access to all the logistic support it needed to mount its recent operations without outside help, and, most importantly, the fact that Ramstein and senior American officers were mentioned as possible RAF targets in their internal documents at least six months before the revival of Palestinian or Libyan interest in terrorist operations in Western Europe.<sup>3</sup>

9. Although we hold no hard evidence of a Soviet hand behind recent anti-US terrorist events, the Soviets bear some responsibility for anti-US terrorism in general. The USSR supports both governments (including those of Libya, Cuba, South Yemen, and the East European states) and entities which, in turn, support or conduct terrorism. The Soviets' support for terrorist training (particularly in the Middle East), their provision of weapons, their anti-American propaganda campaigns, and their efforts to foster cooperation between terrorist groups all provide a backdrop which in some cases favors anti-American terrorism.<sup>4</sup>

10. In the coming months, the major terrorist threats to US interests abroad will be posed by Libya, radical Palestinians, and the West German RAF. The Cubans, too, might present a major terrorist problem to the United States under certain conditions, especial-

<sup>2</sup> The holders of this view are the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Senior Intelligence Officers of the military services.

<sup>3</sup> The holders of this view are the Director, National Foreign Assessment Center, and the Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed discussion of the Soviets and international terrorism, see [redacted]

The Intelligence Community has undertaken various new initiatives—in collection, liaison activities, collation, and analysis—aimed at drawing a more precise picture of the relationships between Soviet and Soviet-client support on the one hand, and terrorist groups on the other.

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ly if Castro felt his rule were endangered by the United States. All of these have a capability and the will to carry out anti-US terrorism either individually or, in some cases, cooperatively. All enjoy the support of extremists in different regions and loose links to other states or groups that employ terrorism.

### Libya

11. The most serious near-term terrorist threat to the United States is that posed by Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi. On 13 August 1981, Libya's "Free Unionist Officers" publicly declared:

... we shall hit at US interests anywhere and undertake the physical liquidation of anyone who permits himself merely to think of harming the life of the leader of the Great 1 September Revolution, beginning with Ronald Reagan.

More recently, Qadhafi threatened to assassinate President Reagan and other senior US Government officials, and to attack US nuclear facilities abroad in the event of another military confrontation with the United States. Qadhafi reportedly declared that he would "fight the President in my own kind of war ... all it takes is money and I have enough to pay even for his own people to kill him." We believe that Qadhafi's remark, made in the wake of the Gulf of Sidra incident, was a defensive response to allegations in the US media and elsewhere that the United States was seeking to eliminate him. Senior Libyan officials also authorized the assassination of the US Ambassador to Italy.

12. On 1 September 1981, Qadhafi declared that Libya would attack US nuclear depots in the Mediterranean area and cause "an international catastrophe" if America again "attacks" the Gulf of Sidra. Libya may have the resources to make such an attempt either by means of a terrorist attack or the use of aircraft or missiles. One report suggests that his threat to attack US nuclear depots is only propaganda but that Qadhafi is planning to attack an undefended US ship in the Mediterranean. Indeed,

reported that the Commander in Chief of the Libyan armed forces stated that a Libyan "air death squadron" composed of Libyans and Palestinians was undergoing training. This may be related to a Libyan threat to attack the USS Nimitz in the event of another armed clash with the United States.

13. These threats are consistent with Libya's established pattern of supporting and conducting terrorist activities. Qadhafi has targeted world leaders (including Anwar Sadat and Valery Giscard d'Estaing) for assassination in the past; he considers assassination a justifiable foreign policy weapon and has the resources to carry out such an act. While Qadhafi has not succeeded in assassinating any world leaders, his agents have killed 12 Libyan exiles so far, and Libyan agents have recently sought to employ Italians who they thought, probably wrongly, were associated with the Red Brigades to carry out additional assassinations of Libyan dissidents in Italy.

14. Over the years Qadhafi has supported such diverse terrorist groups and liberation movements as the Provisional Irish Republican Army, the Japanese Red Army, and the radical Palestinians; he identifies himself with forces striking out against "Zionism" and the "imperialist oppression of the West." Recently, he has focused increasingly on the United States as a target. A recent report from a source whose reliability has not yet been established claims that some members of Libya's Revolutionary Committees of pro-Qadhafi zealots have been ordered to prepare for operations against US interests in the Middle East, Italy, Greece, and Turkey. It is possible that this is related to Qadhafi's public threats against US military installations. The incident in the Gulf of Sidra has contributed to Qadhafi's aggressive, confrontational stance vis-a-vis the United States. The very act of standing up to the United States is interpreted by Qadhafi as an act of revolutionary courage and will in all likelihood prompt him to seek further opportunities for confrontation.

15. While he does suffer from exaggerated emotional reactions, Qadhafi is not psychotic. His judgment and reasoning at times are faulty. Driven by his messianic vision of an Islamic revolution, Qadhafi has a distorted ethnocentric perception of political reality. While his tirades seem erratic, he is not a captive of his impulses and has demonstrated a capacity for patience and careful planning over time. Having now identified the United States as his principal opponent, there is a strong possibility he will mount a sustained terrorist campaign against US interests. We believe that his assassination threats against President Reagan should be taken seriously.

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16. Despite shifting moods in Libyan foreign policy, Qadhafi continues to be driven by three causes: championing his version of Islam, assisting people fighting wars of "national liberation," and defending the "Arab Nation" as he defines it. In promoting these causes Qadhafi has supported groups whose connection to Islam, national liberation, or Pan-Arabism were highly tenuous. Libyan support for terrorist groups seems to reflect the following priorities:

- Palestinians, particularly extremist groups like the PFLP, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine/General Command (PFLP/GC), the Popular Struggle Front (PSF), and the Front for the Liberation of Palestine (FLP)—and possibly the Black June Organization (BJO), which Qadhafi hopes to use in assassinating Palestinian "moderates" including Yasir Arafat.
- Muslim groups, such as the Moro National Liberation Front in the Philippines and the Pattani United Liberation Movement in Thailand, which are minorities in states ruled by non-Muslims and, perhaps, Muslim extremists in countries like Bangladesh and Indonesia. Qadhafi has also assisted the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman/Bahrain (PFLO/B) and the Polisario forces fighting Morocco.
- Antigovernment groups in southern Africa, Latin America, and, to a diminished extent, Western Europe. Libya has in the past trained members of the Italian Red Brigades and the West German RAF. Currently, Libya also trains Salvadoran terrorists and possibly additional Latin American terrorists as well.

17. Qadhafi has also dispatched assassination squads to Western Europe and the United States as a part of a campaign to silence critics of his regime. Exiles who do not return to Libya voluntarily are either to be kidnaped or murdered. The assassination teams appear to be made up of members of Libyan Revolutionary Committees, the Libyan Intelligence Service, and Palestinian operatives. Some of these operatives even travel on passports identifying them as members of the various "People's Bureaus," which have replaced the regular Libyan diplomatic establishments. Because of the negative publicity this campaign has generated, Qadhafi may have become more discriminating in the Libyan dissidents he will target.

### The Palestinians

18. There are growing indications that the United States may be confronted by increased terrorism on the part of radical Palestinians or dissident members of Fatah. Although recent incidents of Palestinian terrorism in Western Europe (such as the attack on a synagogue in Vienna, efforts to smuggle arms into Austria, and bombings in Rome, Istanbul, and Athens) have been directed against Israeli and Jewish interests, Palestinian-sponsored terrorist acts may be increasingly carried out against US interests as well. Khalil al-Wazir, one of Arafat's closest colleagues, has reportedly said that Fatah terrorism would be conducted in Europe only under the most unusual circumstances. Nevertheless, a number of reports suggest the possibility of Palestinian terrorism against US interests:

- Increasing pressure has been placed by radical Palestinian groups, by Fatah militants and pro-Communists, and by Libya and Syria on PLO leader Arafat, particularly in the past year, to approve the resumption of international terrorism and the targeting of US interests.
- Radical Palestinians, supported by Syria and Libya, are seeking to embarrass Arafat by launching terrorist attacks in Western Europe against US and Israeli targets and to sabotage growing PLO-European ties. The recent attack on the Vienna synagogue is an example of this effort.
- Elements in Fatah have recently undertaken renewed preparations for terrorist acts, including reconnaissance missions in Europe, recruitment of terrorist cadres, caching weapons and explosives abroad, and planning of specific acts. These plans include the use of non-Palestinians for terrorist operations.
- The "triggers" for such terrorist operations were to be the reelection of Prime Minister Begin in Israel and the resumption of the delivery of aircraft by the United States to Israel, both of which have already occurred.
- A majority of the PLO Higher Military Committee favored mounting sabotage operations against Saudi oil installations if the Saudis fail to cut off oil supplies to the United States.

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- Dissident Fatah personnel supported by Syria have formed "terrorist teams" to mount operations against US interests.
- The Black September Organization (BSO), Fatah's terrorist wing, was apparently reactivated without Arafat's permission in February or March 1981 under PLO United Security Chief Salah Khalaf. According to the same source, the BSO may have arranged to collaborate with the Italian Red Brigades.
- The BSO has also considered with Iraq the possibility of Iraqi assistance for BSO operations against Israeli and US interests in Europe.

19. It appears that recent developments in the Middle East—including Israeli-Palestinian hostilities in Lebanon, the Israeli bombing of an Iraqi nuclear facility, Begin's reelection, and the resumption of US aircraft deliveries to Israel—have intensified the struggle for control of the PLO. On one side is Fatah leader Arafat, who is still striving to achieve a diplomatic solution to the Palestinian problem, is seeking support from conservative Arab regimes including Saudi Arabia, and is trying to improve his image in Western Europe and the United States. On the other side are a number of small but radical Palestinian splinter groups which oppose Arafat's leadership of the PLO, militantly seek to undermine the Camp David accords, wish to see a broad revolution throughout the Middle East, and are prepared to serve the aims of radical patron states like Syria, Libya, and Iraq. In addition, there are radicals within Fatah who oppose Arafat and what they perceive as his less militant approach to the Palestinian problem.

20. Some of the most radical Palestinian splinter groups are offshoots from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which was for a number of years the most active Palestinian group in international terrorism. That group's terrorist activities began to decline in 1978, and the group was relatively inactive by 1980. However, there are reports of training of West European terrorists, including members of the German Red Army Faction, at PFLP-run training camps in South Yemen.

21. The Arafat camp has not been inactive. There have also been reports of the training of Turks,

Irishmen, German rightists, and Armenians at Fatah camps in Lebanon. According to one report, Fatah was training Armenians as a result of a Soviet request. The Soviets also requested that Arafat offer Cuba cooperation with Latin American revolutionary movements, and he apparently agreed to this request.

#### West Germany

22. The recent anti-American terrorism in West Germany is the work of the Red Army Faction and its sympathizers. The attack on Ramstein AFB has been claimed by the RAF, and we have had indications for some time that the group was indeed planning a return to international terrorist violence and that some attack was planned at Ramstein. From documents seized at captured RAF safehouses and from the confession of captured RAF member Peter Boock, we have learned that other US installations, West German Chancellor Schmidt, and a gathering of senior NATO officers at Heidelberg Castle were also considered targets by the group. However, the attack on Ramstein and the attempted assassination of General Kroesen indicate that the group is increasingly focusing on US targets.

23. The current round of RAF violence appears to be aimed at transforming the group into the vanguard of the German extraparlimentary left, which has been demonstrating against theater force modernization and enhanced warhead production. In the early 1970s, the RAF gained supporters and recruits by attacking US targets during a period of widespread protests against US involvement in the Vietnam conflict. The RAF probably hopes to capitalize on current leftist sentiment against US foreign and defense policies in order to renew its support among extreme German leftists. At Ramstein, the United States may have been the immediate target, but the German left was almost certainly meant to take notice. The left is not likely to rally to the RAF, however, since continued anti-US terrorism in Germany is likely to reduce popular support for the German "peace movement."

24. The resurgence in RAF terrorism follows a period of decline after the Mogadishu hijacking of October 1977. This decline was the result of arrests, deaths, and "retirements" of key RAF personnel. Consequently, the RAF shifted its tactics from demands for money or the release of jailed terrorists to those of low risk aimed at "punishing the establish-

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ment," in order to provoke a "Fascist state" and popular revolt. The decline in RAF terrorism convinced security authorities that the terrorists were rebuilding their organization outside West Germany. On 25 June 1979, General Alexander Haig, then SACEUR, was the target of what was probably an RAF assassination attempt.

25. The recent RAF attacks reflect a reanimation of the group despite the disruptions caused by police efforts during the middle and late 1970s. Evidence taken from a Paris safehouse, in 1980, as well as findings after a traffic accident in July 1980 that resulted in the death of two RAF activists, suggested that attacks were planned against prominent US or West German personalities, such as that which took place against General Kroesen.

26. Notes found in the Paris safehouse indicated that the RAF was trying to recruit personnel from the ranks of the "anti-Fascist" groups ("Antifa") in West Germany as well as from its "legal" supporters, and wished to use its "legals" to create public disturbances connected with causes like antinuclear protests and squatters' rights in order to broaden its base of support.

27. Despite ups and downs, the RAF has continued to maintain links to other terrorists. For example, individual members of the RAF have participated in PFLP operations, and the PFLP has in the past engaged in terrorist operations to force the release of RAF prisoners. The RAF was identified in the mid-1970s as a conduit of weapons and forged documents for the Japanese Red Army. Additionally, the RAF has had contacts with radicals and terrorists throughout Western Europe—the Dutch Red Resistance Front, Swiss anarchists, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), and Italy's Red Brigades.

28. The involvement of West German terrorists with the PFLP offers them logistic support as well as an expanded international field of operation. It has enabled such terrorists, through flight to several Middle Eastern countries, to avoid criminal prosecution. The training of such terrorists in Palestinian camps has expanded their knowledge of the use of weapons and ability to practice sabotage.

### The Coming Anti-American Terrorist Threat

29. In addition to the RAF, Libyan, and Palestinian terrorist threats, a number of other regimes and

entities currently harbor grievances against the United States and have the capability to strike US targets abroad. The foremost among these include:

- Guatemalan and Salvadoran insurgents and other Central American revolutionaries who perceive the United States to be collaborating with conservative regimes in order to prevent political change in the region.
- Iranians who see an American hand behind all of Iran's woes.
- The Syrian regime, which perceives the United States to be in collusion with Israel and its conservative foes in the Arab world.
- Radical Armenian terrorists who have expressed support for radical Palestinians, are anti-American and anti-Israeli, and resent Armenian emigration from the USSR to the United States.
- Castro's Cuba, although it is unlikely to move against US targets in the absence of a major deterioration in US-Cuban relations.
- Turkish leftists who have mounted a number of attacks against US personnel and installations in Turkey.
- The Italian Red Brigades, which have the capability to attack US targets, although doing so would be a departure from past practice.
- Croatian extremists who are aggrieved at US prosecution of their compatriots and US extradition of accused Croatian terrorists to Sweden.
- Puerto Rican separatists who have attacked US military interests since December 1979 and have declared themselves to be "at war with the US military."

### Conclusions

30. International terrorism is likely to increase in the next year, and a higher percentage of it than in the past may be directed against the United States as US foreign policy is perceived to be more assertive. While there is no indication that the United States is currently facing a massive escalation of terrorism, the events of the past few weeks indicate that we do not yet have sufficient means to anticipate where terror-

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ism against Americans will occur and what forms it will take. The most likely focus of anti-US terrorist violence will be against military targets in Western

Europe, particularly in West Germany, and diplomatic/corporate interests in Latin America, the Middle East, and Western Europe.